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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to evaluate the Adult Learning Center (ALC) of the Bowling Green (Kentucky) School System. The ALC is the part of the Bowling Green School System responsible for educating adults and teenagers with special circumstances which make enrollment in the regular public schools inappropiate. The program is individualized, with stress on student responsibility. A sample of 65 students who completed the course of study during the 1979-80 school year (half of those who completed the program) was sent 12-question surveys, with a return of 21 (32 percent). The instrument was designed to describe the student in terms of his/her purpose for attending the ALC as well as elicit the student's evaluation of the ALC. Some of the findings reported included the following: (1) students were described as spending no more than one year at the ALC, having less than a high school diploma or its equivalent when entering the ALC, having left high school for a variety of reasons, having participated in other learning activities since leaving the ALC, and planning for more structured learning activities over the next five years; (2) half of the students reported liking their post-ALC jobs more than their previous jobs; (3) learning materials were rated "good" or better; (4) students' ratings of teachers were high; (5) general skill areas were rated high; (6) students felt the ALC had prepared them to take the General Educational Development Tests (GED); and (7) all students felt the time spent at the ALC had been "worthwhile." (KC)

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A Follow Up Study of Bowling Green Learning Center Students

PREPS RESEARCH PROJECT
1980 - 1981

The Bowling Green School System
Bowling Green, Kentucky
42101

CE 028 254

Report By

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and

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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FORWARD

This document is the final report of a research study conducted jointly by Mr. Joel Brown and Mr. George Esters of the Bowling Green School System and the Research Team of the Professional Development Center Network.

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INTRODUCTION

The administration of the Bowling Green School System was concerned with evaluating the Adult Learning Center (ALC). The ALC is that part of the Bowling Green School System responsible for educating adults and teenagers with special circumstances that make enrollment in the regular public schools inappropriate.

ALC students learn through individualized programs that have been designed to meet the students' goals and objectives. The system is structured so that ALC students assume a great deal of the responsibility for their education.

Administrators in the Bowling Green School System wanted to get feedback from former students on how effective they judged the program to be both in terms of the actual learning taking place as well as the structure which places responsibility on students. As a result, a four page survey instrument was circulated to former students. Data from this survey provided the basis for this report.

POPULATION

The population of this study was all students who completed their course of study during the 1979-1980 school year (n = 130). A systematic sample of the population was selected to receive the survey instrument (n = 65). Of these 65 persons, 21 (approximately 32 percent) completed the instrument and returned it to the ALC. These 21 persons form the sample of the study.

INSTRUMENT

The instrument was designed for this study by Mr. George Esters in conjunction with the PREPS Research Team. It consisted of 12 major questions some of which contained several subparts. In all there were 30 variables to the study. The instrument was designed to describe the student in terms of their

purpose for attending the ALC as well as elicit their evaluation of the ALC. Questions were structured to provide data for program improvement. A copy of the instrument can be found in the appendix.

DATA COLLECTION

The instruments were sent to selected persons in late January 1981, accompanied by a cover letter and a stamped return envelope. Five of the 65 envelopes sent were returned to the sender because the student had moved leaving no forwarding address. Twenty-one of the remaining 60 (35 percent) were returned during the next month and formed the sample of the study.

ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Thirty-five percent of students receiving the survey returned the form. All instruments were judged to have been completed in a thoughtful manner. It is assumed for the purpose of this report that the 21 respondents adequately represent all students completing their program at the ALC during the 1979-1980 school year.

FINDINGS

The first five questions of the survey instrument described the sample. Respondents reported having spent from one month to one year at the ALC, having less than a high school diploma or its equivalent upon entering the ALC, having left high school for a great variety of reasons, having generally participated in other structured learning activities since leaving the ALC, and generally planning for more structured learning activities over the next five years. Tables 1 through 5 present this data in greater detail.

Table 1

Response to Time Spent
at the ALC

Time	Frequency of Response
less than 1 month	0
from 1 to 3 months	9
from 4 to 6 months	6
from 7 to 9 months	4
from 10 to 12 months	2
from 12 to 18 months	0
for more than 18 months	0

Table 2

Response to Grade Completed
Before Attending ALC

Grade	Frequency of Response
less than 8 grades of school	2
9th grade	5
10th grade	6
11th grade	8
12th grade	0
more than 12 grades	0

Table 3

Response to Reason for Leaving
Regular High School

Reason	Frequency of Response
illness or disability	1
to get married or become a parent	2
poor grades	2
disinterest in school subjects	1
financial reasons	1
personal reasons	3
I was expelled or suspended	4
I did not leave school	5
other	2

Table 4

Response to Educational Programs
Taken Since Attending ALC

Educational Program	Frequency of Response
vocational-technical school	4
college or university	5
apprenticeship	2
community education programs	0
other	5

Table 5

Response to Educational Program
Planned Over Next Five Years

Educational Programs	Frequency of Response
vocational-technical school	6
college or university	6
apprenticeship	2
community education programs	1
other	4

Question six and seven asked the respondent to compare the job now held to the one held prior to attending the ALC. Question five asked how much better the respondent liked the present job and question six asked how their income on the present job compared to that on the former job.

Two of the 21 respondents did not answer these two questions. Six persons either did not have a job before attending the ALC or were not presently employed. Consequently, data contrasting jobs before and after the ALC was available on only 8 persons. Not one of these eight rated their liking or earnings any less after attending the ALC than before. Four liked their jobs more and four liked their jobs about the same. Two were earning more money and six were earning about the same. Tables 6 and 7 present this data in greater detail. These data appear to indicate that completion of an ALC program often resulted in a job respondents liked better and sometimes resulted in more income but never resulted in a job the respondent liked less or earned less. It should be noted that respondents had completed their program at the ALC within the last year. This area of questioning would appear to bear some further investigation over a longer time frame.

Table 6

Responses to Question Asking If
Present Job Was Liked Better
Than Job Held Prior to Attending ALC

Response Categories	Frequency of Response
considerably more	3
somewhat more	1
about the same	4
somewhat less	0
considerably less	0
I did not have a job before attending the ALC	6
I do not have a job now	5

Table 7

Responses to Question Asking If
More Money Was Earned on
Job After Attending ALC

Response Categories	Frequency of Response
considerably greater	0
somewhat greater	2
about the same	6
somewhat less	0
considerably less	0
I did not have a job before attending the ALC	6
I do not have a job now	5

Question eight asked for a rating of the learning materials used at the ALC. The question was structured so respondents would check excellent, good, fair, poor, or no opinion. Four points were assigned to a rating of excellent, three to good, two to fair, and one to poor. Means and standard deviations were computed for English and math ratings given by men and women. Mean ratings for social studies, science, health, reading, chemistry, and earth science are reported grouping men and women together due to the low n. Table 8 presents the ratings for learning materials.

The rating given the English materials by both men and women was close to "good." Women were slightly more positive than men but the difference in scoring was not statistically significant.

The rating given the math materials by women was between "good" and "excellent" as compared to the rating by men that fell slightly below "good." These ratings were significantly different indicating that women were more satisfied with the math materials than men.

Ratings for social studies and science materials are reported for men and women combined. Science received a rating falling slightly above the "good" level and social studies a rating slightly below the "good" level.

Reading, chemistry, and earth science were rated by only one person each and received "excellent" ratings.

Data in response to question eight would appear to indicate overall satisfaction with learning materials. However, men were less satisfied than women with math materials and social studies was rated lowest of all learning materials by the combined group of men and women. It would appear that these two sets of materials might deserve some review.

Table 8

Ratings of Learning Materials in Eight Areas
By Sex of Respondent
[(mean, (standard deviation), and n)]

Learning Material	Men's Rating	Women's Rating	Test of Significance
English	2.89 (0.78) n=9	3.17 (0.75) n=6	t=0.69 p=0.51
Math	2.71 (0.49) n=8	3.43 (0.54) n=7	t=2.61* p=0.02
Social Studies	2.71 (0.76) n=7		
Science	3.28 (0.49) n=7		
Health	3.50 n=2		
Reading	4.00 n=1		
Chemistry	4.00 n=1		
Earth Science	4.00 n=1		

Question nine asked for the same ratings as described in question eight when judging teachers rather than materials. Table 9 reports means and standard deviations similarly to Table 8.

The ratings given by both men and women to teachers of both English and math ranged between "good" and "excellent." In both cases women rated teachers somewhat more positively but not enough for statistical significance.

Teachers were rated at or above the "good" level for social studies, science, health, reading, chemistry, and earth science.

Data would appear to indicate high satisfaction with teachers in all subject areas. It would appear that teachers are doing a very good job of meeting the needs of students.

Table 9

Ratings of Teachers in Eight Areas
By Sex of Respondent
[mean, (standard deviation), and n]

Learning Material	Men's Ratings	Women's Ratings	Test of Significance
English	3.20 (0.92) n=10	3.67 (0.52) n=6	t=1.30 p=0.22
Math	3.13 (0.99) n=8	3.71 (0.49) n=7	t=1.49 p=0.17
Social Studies	3.33 (0.52) n=6		
Science	3.29 (0.49) n=7		
Health	3.00 n=2		
Reading	4.00 n=1		
Chemistry	4.00 n=1		
Earth Science	4.00 n=1		

Question ten asked for a rating on seven general skill areas. These areas would not have been taught directly in the ALC program but, hopefully, would have been "caught" by the student as a by-product of attending the ALC. The question was worded so that respondents would rate the ALC for its help in improving these general skill areas. Ratings were on the same 4, 3, 2, 1 scale used for questions eight and nine.

All seven general skill areas received a rating at or above the "good" level by both men and women. The highest rating was for coping with daily problems given by males (3.80). No significant differences were found between male and female data on any general skill area. Table 10 presents the general skill ratings in greater detail.

These data would appear to indicate that considerable learning was happening in these seven general skills.

Table 10

Ratings of General
Skills in Seven Areas
By Sex of Respondent
[mean, (standard deviation), and n]

Skill Area	Men's Rating	Women's Rating	Test of Significance
	(n=8)	(n=9)	
Making decisions	3.25 (0.71)	3.29 (0.76)	t=0.09, p=0.93
Managing time well	3.00 (0.87)	3.56 (0.73)	t=1.47, p=0.16
Getting along with others	3.13 (0.84)	3.44 (1.01)	t=0.71, p=0.49
Following instructions	3.22 (0.83)	3.67 (0.50)	t=1.37, p=0.19
Coping with daily problems	3.80 (0.45)	3.50 (0.93)	t=0.78, p=0.45
Communicating effectively	3.00 (0.71)	3.44 (0.73)	t=1.12, p=0.29
Learning how to learn	3.33 (0.71)	3.56 (0.73)	t=0.66, p=0.52

Bowling Green High School seniors for the 1979-1980 school year had been asked to rate the same seven general skill areas (Abram, 1979-1980). Table 10-A gives their mean ratings along with the ALC student's mean ratings. It can be seen that the ALC students gave a higher rating for every general skill area. Note should be taken of the differences between the two samples being compared (seniors were younger and in a more structured setting) when placing a judgment on the data. Nevertheless, if the senior data is used as a baseline of how much the average Bowling Green student feels his school helped him develop in these areas under typical learning conditions then the higher ratings of the ALC students might be interpreted as indicating greater help by the ALC in learning these general skills.

Table 10-A

Ratings of Bowling Green High Seniors and ALC Students on Seven General Skill Areas (means and standard deviations)

Skill Area	Bowling Green High Seniors (n=120)	ALC Students (n=21)
Making decisions	2.39 (0.84)	3.27 (0.74)
Managing time well	2.24 (0.85)	3.23 (0.80)
Getting along with others	2.68 (0.81)	3.29 (0.93)
Following instructions	2.58 (0.72)	3.45 (0.67)
Coping with daily problems	2.23 (0.88)	3.65 (0.69)
Communicating effectively	2.45 (0.88)	3.22 (0.72)
Learning how to learn	2.33 (0.87)	3.45 (0.72)

Question eleven asked whether the time and effort expended in the ALC had been worthwhile. Fourteen persons rated it very worthwhile, six as somewhat worthwhile, and one did not answer the question. It would appear that students highly prized their experience at the ALC.

Table 11

Responses to Question As To Whether
Time and Effort at ALC Was Worthwhile

Worthwhileness Rating	Frequency of Response
Very worthwhile	14
Somewhat worthwhile	6
Not at all worthwhile	0

Question 12 asked for the student's reason for enrollment in the ALC. Fourteen indicated they enrolled to obtain high school credits and six indicated they were preparing for the GED. No one used the second response category which attempted to separate out students who might have had reasons other than a high school diploma or its equivalent in the GED exam.

Five of the six students who had prepared for the GED indicated they had attempted the GED. Three of these five had successfully passed. Of these three, two had passed on their first attempt. The third person had passed after her third attempt. In open-ended comments she stated that two of the attempts were made prior to attending the ALC and she attributed passing on her third attempt to the help she received at the ALC.

A follow-up question (12-A-2) asked whether the reading and math skills learned at the ALC allowed the respondent to pass the GED. All students responding to this question marked "yes."

This data would appear to indicate that three-fifths of the ALC students taking the GED have passed on their first attempt following ALC preparation.

Table 12

Response to Question Asking
Reason For Attending The ALC

Reason for Attendance	Frequency of Response
Obtain high school credits	14
Special skill	0
Preparation for GED	6

Question 12-B allowed students who had indicated they attended the ALC to prepare for the GED to give their opinions as to how the ALC teachers could have helped them to better prepare for the GED. Of the six persons who had prepared for the GED three (50 percent) gave responses to this question. Two of the three indicated they had successfully passed. One of these two suggested, "working longer hours" and the other made no suggestion for improvement instead used this opportunity to state that without the ALC she did not feel she could have passed the GED (she had failed twice before without ALC help). The third person had not successfully passed but indicated that the full responsibility for this failure rested with her.

SUMMARY

A twelve question survey instrument was jointly constructed by Mr. George Esters, Director of the Bowling Green Adult Learning Center (ALC), and the Research Team of the Professional Development Center Network. It was mailed to a systematic sample of persons completing their program at the ALC during the 1979-1980 school year. Sixty-five surveys were mailed, five were returned by the post office as undeliverable, and 21 (35 percent of the 60 delivered) were returned. Data presented in this report are calculated on the 21 returns. It is assumed that the data adequately represents all students completing their program at the ALC during the 1979-1980 school year.

Students were described as spending no more than one year at the ALC, having less than a high school diploma or its equivalent upon entering the ALC, having left high school for a variety of reasons, having generally participated in other structured learning activities since leaving the ALC, and generally planning for more structured learning activities over the next five years.

Students were asked to compare pre-ALC jobs to post-ALC jobs. No student reported liking their job less or earning less after completing the ALC program. Half of the students reported liking their post-ALC jobs more and one-quarter reported earning more after their ALC program.

Students were asked to rate the learning materials used at the ALC. Generally materials received a "good" or better rating. Two areas received slightly less than "good" ratings and would appear to be areas the administration might review to strengthen the program. These two areas were math materials (rated slightly less than "good" by men although receiving very high ratings by women) and social studies.

Students' rating of teachers in all subject areas was high. It would appear that teachers are doing a very good job at meeting the needs of students.

Seven general skill areas were rated by students in terms of how the ALC helped the students to improve in those areas. Very high ratings were given to each of the general skill areas by both men and women. Comparison was made with ratings given those same general skill areas by 1979-1980 seniors at Bowling Green High School. It was found that ALC students rated the help they had received in each of the seven general skill areas higher.

All students felt time spent at the ALC had been worthwhile with more than two-thirds of respondents using the most positive response category, "very worthwhile."

Fourteen students indicated they had used their preparation at the ALC to obtain credits to apply to a high school diploma. Six students indicated

they had attended to prepare for the GED. Five of the six had already taken the GED. Three had passed. All students felt the ALC had adequately prepared them to take the GED.

APPENDIX

BOWLING GREEN ADULT LEARNING CENTER
SURVEY

1. I attended the ALC (Adult Learning Center) for (check one):

____ less than 1 month
____ from 1 to 3 months
____ from 4 to 6 months
____ from 7 to 9 months
____ from 10 to 12 months
____ from 12 to 18 months
____ for more than 18 months

2. BEFORE I attended the ALC I had completed (check one):

____ less than 8 grades of school
____ 9th grade
____ 10th grade
____ 11th grade
____ 12th grade
____ more than 12 grades

3. I left regular day school because (check one):

____ of illness or disability
____ to get married or become a parent
____ of poor grades
____ of disinterest in school subjects
____ of financial reasons
____ of personal reasons
____ I was expelled or suspended
____ I did not leave school
____ other (please give reason _____)

4. SINCE I left the ALC I have been involved in the following educational programs (check all that apply):

____ vocational-technical school
____ college or university
____ apprenticeship
____ community education programs
____ other (please list program _____)

5. WITHIN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS I hope to continue my education in the following ways (check all that apply):

____ vocational-technical school
____ college or university
____ apprenticeship
____ community education programs
____ other (please list program _____)

6. Compared to the job I had before I attended the ALC I would say I LIKE my present job

____ considerably more
____ somewhat more
____ about the same
____ somewhat less
____ considerably less
____ I did not have a job before attending the ALC
____ I do not have a job now

7. Compared to the job I had before I attended the ALC I would say MY PRESENT INCOME (take home pay) is

____ considerably greater
____ somewhat greater
____ about the same
____ somewhat less
____ considerably less
____ I did not have a job before attending the ALC
____ I do not have a job now

8. I would rate the LEARNING MATERIALS I studied as:
(Please check correct box)

PLACEMENT IN:	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion (I did not take work in this area)
English					
Math					
Other areas (Please list) a.					
b.					
c.					

9. I would rate the TEACHERS as:
(Please check correct box)

PLACEMENT IN:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
English					
Math					
Other areas (Please list) a.					
b.					
c.					

10. I would rate the ALC for its help in IMPROVING MY SKILLS in the following areas as:
(Please check correct box)

SKILL AREA

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
Making decisions					
Managing time well					
Getting along with others					
Following instructions					
Coping with daily problems					
Communicating effectively					
Learning how to learn					

11. I feel the time and effort I put into attending the ALC has been:

____very worthwhile
____somewhat worthwhile
____not at all worthwhile

12. I attended the ALC to work on:

____ obtaining high school credits

____ obtaining special skills not related to high school credit or the GED examination

____ preparing me for the GED

If you checked either of these answers, you have finished this survey.

THANK YOU

Please return it in the stamped envelope

If you prepared for the GED please answer these questions --

A. I have taken the GED

____ yes ____ no

1. The number of times I took the GED before passing was:

____ 1 time
____ 2 times
____ 3 times
____ more than 3 times

2. I believe the reading and math skills I obtained at ALC allowed me to pass the GED exam

____ yes ____ no

B. The ALC teachers could have helped me be better prepared for the GED by (list your ideas in the space below):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for completing this survey.
Please return it in the stamped envelope.

References

Abram, Marie J.. Opinion of Bowling Green High School Seniors, Professional Development Center Network, 1979-1980.